

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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No. 131

## COLLECTORS AND THE ENGLISH PENNY DREADFUL

by Charles W. Daniel

"Oyes! Oyes! Oyes! What lack you. Good Gentles? Here's wares for all tastes, young and old. I have Pirate stories, Highwayman stories, Historical, and Romantical stories, possible and impossible stories galore. I have books of weird and wonderful happenings, of things that could happen and never did, and that which could not and did. Tales of the Past, Present and the Future. Step up Good Gentles, and try my wares."

Looking over a back number of the Dime Novel Round-Up the other day, I noticed a remark by our gifted Editor, to the effect that his Countrymen took but small interest in the English Penny Dreadful. Being an Englishman, I thought this over, and it occurred to me, that if this be true, and I do not doubt it, that my brother collectors in America are missing a lot of pleasure that they might easily obtain.

It is safe to say that though every collector has his own individual likes and dislikes, we are none the less all the same at heart. My own experience leads me to believe that the majority of us started our hobby in much the same way. A sudden desire comes upon us to re-read a story that thrilled us in our boyhood. We look around wondering if it is possible to obtain a copy, and in the search discover that there are many other stories of a similar nature which we have missed, and so we start collecting.

It was so with me, and quite naturally I started hunting for papers that had been published in my own

country. One day, a copy of "Diamond Dick, Jr." came into my hands. It was priced 5 cents, and dated 1901. I read it through, and realised with a feeling of pleasure, that I had discovered a new field in which to search. Since that day, I have sought just as assiduously for American as for English papers of this class, and I may say I derive as much pleasure from the possession of the one as the other.

From this I am led to believe that it is not prejudice that leads collectors in America to neglect papers not produced in their own country, but lack of knowledge of what England can supply.

The English periodicals, and stories embrace a great variety of subjects, quite sufficient to suit all tastes, and for every one dealt with in Dime Novels, I believe we can match it in a Penny Dreadful. There is but one exception, we have no baseball stories, for the simple reason that the game is not played here.

I have no knowledge when the first Dime Novel made its appearance in the U. S. A., but in England I believe that somewhere about 1830 would be a likely date for the P. D. As to its origin, I have wondered if it might not have been slowly evolved from the Broadsheets, and "Lives of the Notorious Malefactors," so popular with our forefathers.

The early penny dreadfuls were intended for adult reading, for they were not written to appeal to the youthful mind, but for those with a taste for all that was horrible and blood-thirsty. That these papers had a fairly big circulation, there can be no doubt, and I think that this can be explained by the drab conditions



in which the poorer classes lived. Little excitement came their way, so they were driven to seek relief from the dull round, in the lurid pages of these productions. None the less, although these stories may not appeal to the aesthetic taste of the collector, the books have an attraction all their own. Their quaint, and generally very crude woodcuts, their title pages untidily set out, their association with the times long since gone, all combine to make them worthy of the collectors attention.

It is noticeable too, that some of these Penny Horribles were written by women, that is, if we may believe the title pages; but after examining quite a number of these stories, I am doubtful if the statement can always be relied upon.

In order to deceive the opponents to the publication of this type of literature, most innocent and uninspiring titles were used. Who would dream that "Alice Leighton," was an Highwayman story, or that "Emma Mayfield" dealt with Dick Turpin and his gang of toughs. Some titles however, were frankly puzzling. "The Ranger of the Tomb," for instance, might cause some speculation as to what sort of un-natural creature this could be, until one discovered that the chief character was a count who dealt in the black art.

These were the real Penny Dreadfuls, but long before they had ceased to appear, penny number stories, and journals for boys had come into existence. Highwayman and Pirate tales appear to have been amongst the first of the former, though School stories followed them closely. Of Knights of the Road, Dick Turpin was the favorite, and his adventures have been chronicled down to modern times. The famous "Black Bess" is the longest highwayman story written. It consists of 254 numbers, contains 136 chapters, and 2,028 pages. Thus, issued in weekly numbers, it took almost five years to read. Some story! The most marvelous thing about it, is that it should ever have survived in its entirety, to this day. But it has, and on rare occasions one sees copies of it offered for sale. "Blueskin," by the same author, contains 158 numbers, but of this only five copies are known.

Of Pirate Romances, "Black Rollo, the American Pirate," deserves mention, as do "Adrift on the Spanish

Main," "Pirates Isle," "Black Eyed Susan," "Nailed to the Mast," and "Alone in the Pirate's Lair." Bracebridge Hemyng is probably wellknown as the author of the Jack Harkaway series, but I do not think his "Brigands of the Sea, or the Sailor Highwayman" has been published in the U. S. A. It is quite a long book, and well worth adding to one's collection.

Many titles of the Romantic, or Historical stories could be quoted, but I must limit myself to the following: "The Jester's Revenge," "The Night Guard, or The Secret of the Five Masks," "The Mysterious Horseman, a Romance of Old London," "The Rival Apprentices," "The Young Apprentice, or Watchwords of Old London," "Wat Tyler," and "The Headsman of Old London Bridge."

The Journals published all types indiscriminately, Pirate, Highwayman, Historical, Romantic and School tales, jostled each other for precedence.

A number of these papers were designed to appeal to both adult and juvenile readers at the same time. "Young Folks Paper" is a good example. It was a large, well printed paper, and in a volume to hand, I find a sentimental love story, "Ruby's Reward" printed side by side with "The Three Little Crusoes." It was in this paper that Stevenson's famous story "Treasure Island," first saw the light although it was printed under the pseudonym of Captain George North.

Of Journals solely devoted to boys, their number is legion. "The Boys of England" easily comes first, but "The Boys Standard," "The Boys Comic Journal," "Boys Leisure Hour," "Sons of Britannia" and "Boys of the Empire" to mention but a few, were all in great demand.

It would be hopeless to attempt to give a representative list of journals and stories in the small space at my command, seeing that a volume might be filled with ease. Perhaps some day a collector, with time and money to spare, will undertake the task. It would require a considerable amount of research, for England is so rich in this form of literature, but it would be a fascinating occupation. I have only touched the very fringe of this subject, but if what I have said should arouse the interest of some brother collectors in America, I advise them to try a few samples of the Penny Dreadful. They will not regret it. Fin-



ally I would welcome letters from anyone with interests similar to my own, and should he so desire, will willingly place what little information I may have at his service. My address may be found in the "Happy Brotherhood" list given in No. 125 of the Dime Novel Round Up.

### DR. RICHARD TANNER

#### "Diamond Dick" Dies at Nebraska Home

Norfolk, Neb., July 3, 1943 (AP) — This town's link with the glamorous days of the Wild West has been broken. Dr. Richard Tanner, 74, known as "Diamond Dick" to thousands who saw his amazing feats of marksmanship at Wild West circus performances before the turn of the century, died last night. His death was due in part to a broken leg suffered in a fall at his home when a chair slipped out from under him.

He had kept his identity a well-hidden secret for 15 years after he quit the circus show ring to become a country doctor in northeast Nebraska. It was when the local American Legion post sponsored a Western rodeo in 1925 that his fellow citizens learned that Dr. Tanner was "Diamond Dick." He appeared in the rodeo parade in the colorful buckskin costume of his circus days. He was quick to point out that he wasn't a Wild West hero as portrayed in the "Diamond Dick" stories that were so popular with youngsters some years back.

But his colorful career as a Wild West performer started when he was a youth of 16. Extremely proficient with rifle and pistol, he was attracted to Wild West circuses, and his skill soon placed him among the ranking performers. He was billed as "Diamond Dick," and for a time had his own attraction—Diamond Dick's Wild West shows.

When he was in his early 20's he saddled a horse at Lincoln, Neb., and rode it to New York and back. He claimed it was the longest horseback ride on record—5500 miles—without a change of horses. In 1905 he decided to become a doctor. Four years later he was graduated from the old Lincoln Medical College at Neb. In 1910 he began his practice at Norfolk.

Dr. Richard J. Tanner (Diamond

Dick) 315 So. 12th St., Norfolk, Nebr. was an Honorary Member of the Happy Hours Brotherhood, No. 100, since 1926.

We'll all miss him, for he was our own Diamond Dick. God bless him.

Dear Ralph:

I am glad that you published the whole of my article, or letter, on my Golden Hours' reminiscences. As in some degree a participant in some of the onetime doings of that weekly so well known to the "Dime Novel" fellows of its later days, I occupy perhaps a different position than do those who merely read it. I wrote Bragin about what I had done, following your "editorial" request, and found him deeply interested. He felt that what I had to say in general, but particularly with regard to John De Morgan as "Hyder Ragged" and Edgar Franklin Stearns as the author of "Bones," is really historical. But he wondered if De Morgan really wrote under the name of Hyder Ragged as an English author, or whether the name was one manufactured merely for the American prints by Munro. Well, there may be a question as to that, and I suggested that, following the publication of my article, he prepare something for you from his own standpoint, so that both sides of the argument could be presented. That might possibly lead to some future discussion of interest. My own opinion is based upon my memory of long standing. In the old days I knew Victor St. Clair, the actual George Waldo Browne of Manchester, N. H., very well, and from time to time I visited him. Naturally, since I was writing short stories for Golden Hours, he told me a lot of things about the Golden Hours authors that he knew. Undoubtedly he told me quite a bit about John De Morgan's early days as a writer in both England and America. Then I knew another onetime New Hampshire "Dime Novelist," Fred Myron Colby, of Warner, N. H. Colby and Browne were both basically historians, but Browne specialized on New Hampshire history, while Colby wrote on Egyptian history, and also wrote one powerful book novel, "A Daughter of Pharaoh," a copy of which I have. Colby once showed me a volume of his Beadle Yellowbax novels, which he had collected and had bound in cloth at a binder's. They



were written under his wife's or mother's maiden name, I can't be sure just which. I wish now that I had taken plenty of notes "on the scene," so that now I could be absolutely sure. Now Colby may have told me much about some of the Dime Novelists. One of his friends, I recollect, was Arthur Grissom, a Beadle writer, also from New Hampshire. So I was then in a position to gather a lot of material which in those days had not the same significance to me as they would have now. I also knew Edward Walter Dawson who had done some writing for Frank Tousey, and had been called upon to write some chapters in an Indian novel left unfinished by George G. Small while on an extensive "bat." The novel had to be carried on, and so Dawson did an installment or two, which surprised Small very much after his return to his senses after the prolonged "drunk." Some of these items have been mentioned in "PEEP-SHOW."

When "Old Cap Collier" was discontinued in favor of the colored-cover weekly, "Up-to-Date," Editor Abarbanell—who was reputed to have made a translation of Dumas's "Count of Monte Cristo"—asked me to write him a novel for publication, in case the "Up-to-Date Weekly" got to the point where it could afford to use original material in place of reprinting former Golden Hours serials. I had a South American Indian yarn, "Trails of the Montana; or, Yankee Pluck in Peru," in readiness for him, but poor old "Up-to-Date" didn't last long enough to use it. I have sometimes wondered if my faded manuscript might not sometime be printed as a sort of special for the "benefit" of the modern Dime Novel collector, though probably no bold publisher could ever realize from the sale of copies what he put into it—unless he could sell them as "curiosities" at a moderately high price.

—Willis E. Hurd

## NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Charles M. Taylor of Philadelphia, congratulates the Round-Up on its pulling power, for he received the Round-Up with his ad in it, and next morning there was a copy of Paul Jones #19 waiting for him, that's

pretty quick service, and soon after he received Do & Dare #51.

Have you received a copy of "Civil War on the Range," by Walter Pannell, yet, for only a thin dime, you get over 50 pages of reading matter, and is it exciting. Well, send 10c to Welcome News, Suite 214-R, 404 W. 9th St., Los Angeles 15, California. Has colored front cover too.

Ye editor Cummings has been haying for the past month, or more, pitching hay for all he was worth. One day, after the truck was loaded quite high, coming thru the drive way of another man's lot, ye editor came off with half the load on top of him. He was shaken up a lot, and to think he was kidding Eli A. Messier on his fall off the icy steps, so ye editor really fell like a ton of brick, and onto a rock pile at that. The strain was again opened, and he bled every day for a week. He is O. K. now, until the next time.

To think, about a year ago, C. N. Sautter of Marion, Ohio, fell from the porch of the place he was working, and fractured his right arm. The bone was set at City Hospital. Cloyd feels like a new man now.

Bill Hahn of Evansville, Ind., says in all his travels thru the south and west he's only been able to pick up one Boys Best #7 in bum shape, down in Memphis over a year ago. Even most of the bookstores and antique places have forgotten what they really look like now.

What do you say, fellows, about having a "Who Are You In Dime Novels"? If not interested, O.K. If you are, Write.

My printer says that as wages have gone up, a one-third minimum wage increase ordered by Dept. of Labor, and skilled help is scarce, I'm wondering where it's all going to end. The printer says he's got to charge me more per issue than he has been doing, so we must plan on what to do.

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Dear old E. H. B. showed his wonderful patience and love for his boy readers in his replies and encouragement given these two boys who later became clever authors. Ching Chings Own. A thorough good journal for the boys was a larger sized journal than others of its period, being about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  x  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches with three  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inch columns to the page. It was published in weekly numbers and 13 number volumes instead of the usual 26 nos. The first number I have is No. 27, being No. 1, of Vol. 3. Starts off with "Gal-lant Hal, and the Crew of the Silver Star, by E. H. Burrage who not only edited the journal but wrote 95% of the serials which ran through its pages. Young Ching at School or, good times for the Slapcrashers was the second serial, and the Veiled Captain, the Hero of Eagle Craig was the third. A page of comic illustrations swiped from Puck, Judge and other American comic papers but with captions and dialog rewritten by E. H. B. to better suit his readers, a riddle dept., a two or three page novelette, several short articles and correspondence.

Stories were well illustrated with pen and ink drawings. There were also competitions for silver cups, medals and certificates of merit. Burrage paid special attention to the correspondence dept., answering every letter himself and in many cases answering them through the mail. He put many an unhappy lad who was in trouble on the right track by his kindly, helpful and understanding replies. Many a young author also got his first pat on the back from Burrage—many who later became successful writers. To be continued in our next.

Homer Kurtz says Gilbert Patten has always been his favorite, he says he owes Mr. Patten a debt he can never repay as Frank Merriwell did a big part in shaping his course in life, far more than any church or preachers ever did. He understands Mr. Patten was in very hard financial circumstances some while back, and he sure hopes that his book on "Mr. Frank Merriwell" had a large sale. It is his earnest hope that when he crosses the Great Divide, that he can meet the spirits of great men like Gilbert Patten. He certainly had a wonderful insight into boys characters. Homer was operated on in the Wichita, Kan., Veterans Hospital on

Nov. 27, 1939, for a double Hernia and came back home Dec. 22nd, in time for Christmas. He's never recovered fully from the operation and other complications have set in that he may never recover. He hasn't been able to do a days' work since, or that is, up to a short time ago. They sure are very mean things to have.

Harold Holmes says, notice after the answers to Oct. Quiz in the Dec. Roundup that you are discontinuing for lack of interest. Wonder if some of the lack of interest is not caused by printing the answers a month after the questions. Here is how it has worked in my own case. I read the questions with interest and pondered over them till I answered them where I could in my mind. Yet when the new Round-up arrived with the answers my issue with the questions had been filed away and I haven't yet dug it out to see what it was all about. If the answers had been in the same issue as the questions, I would have turned to the answers (on another page) and really gotten something out of it. That's my idea on it. (Guess you're about right, Harold.)

Geo. Barton says, that in No. 156 of Answers—R. A. H. Goodyear, Projected Flight" accepted. It is our desire to give amateurs as much fame as lies in our power. We have, therefore, finally decided to print their accepted work among the professional work. The fact is, the world "amateur" unduly prejudices some people against really clever writing. For quite a period of time there was hardly an issue of Ching Chings Own that did not have a communication from Goodyear or Pierce.

#### NOTICE

No. 2 of the Dime Novel Roundup has been reprinted at great expense, so whoever wishes a copy, send me what you think this No. is worth to you, to help complete your set up to date.

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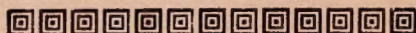
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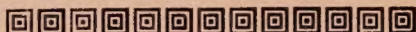
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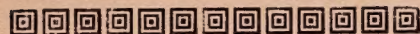
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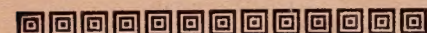
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**Ralph F. Cummings**

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